

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A SILENT WITNESS.

BY EDMUND YATES.

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "CASTAWAY," "THE YELLOW FLAG," &c. &c.

CHAPTER VI. A DESPERATE DEED.

WALTER DANBY stood looking on at the scene before him, mentally and bodily paralysed, without the power to think or move, for some minutes. When his senses returned his first impulse was to fly. What he had seen was enough to convince him of the lawlessness of the men with whom he had been associated, and of the certainty of their having committed robbery and murder. No! A ray of hope flashed across him which for Anne's sake he was only too glad to welcome—they were the receivers of the stolen property, they might even have planned the robbery, but they could not be the doers of the deed of blood. Heath was away at the time, and Studley—what was that the police-sergeant had said, that the robbery must have been arranged by some person conversant with the premises and the dead man's ways? Heath! Who had given him the diamonds to catalogue and store away, and consequently knew of their exact whereabouts, and their immense value? Heath!

Danby's heart sank within him as he thought of these things. His brain reeled, and he felt sick and faint. He must have air, or he would swoon. He must go out, through the window by which he had entered, give up all thought of seeing Anne that evening, and make his way back to London as best he could. Softly he turned, made out indistinctly the form of the window through which the last faint traces of daylight were visible, and moved towards it. The next moment he

stumbled over one of the open portmantaus, and fell upon the floor; the next, and the door between the rooms was dashed open, and Danby, still prostrate, felt a heavy weight upon his body, and a strong suffocating grip upon his throat.

"This is your cat!" cried the man who had seized him. Heath's voice, he knew it at once. "What a fool I was to believe you before! Bring the lamp and let's see whom we've got here; no, stay, the wind will blow it out. Help me to carry him into the back room, lift his legs, so!"

They dragged him into the dining-room and Heath knelt down beside him, and put his hand under his chin to force the head back. There was no need for this, however; Walter Danby threw up his head, as well as he could in his cramped position, and the expression in his bright eyes was bold and fearless.

"Danby!" said Heath, under his breath, then turning to Studley, "How did he get here? We heard no bell."

"He must have come through the back gate," said the captain, whose face was deadly pale, and whose thin lips visibly trembled. "Through the back gate—he knows it—I've taken him that way myself."

All this time, Heath's hand had been twined in Danby's neckerchief. He removed it now, bidding the young man get up and seat himself on an old-fashioned, high-backed oak chair which stood close to the wall. Danby obeyed. He had lost his breath in the fall and the struggle, and his heart was beating loudly; but he confronted the two men with calmness, almost with ease.

"Now, sit still, or it will be the worse for you!" said Heath, seating himself on the corner of the table, and swinging his

leg to and fro. "How long have you been in that room?"

"Probably ten minutes!" replied Danby, in a steady voice, and with his eyes firmly fixed on his interrogator.

Heath descended from the table, passed into the outer room, closed the door, and, pulling aside the curtain, peered through the glass, for the purpose of ascertaining what portions of the room were in view; then he opened the door and, before closing it again, bade Studley, "Speak, say something, anything, and in your usual tone."

Finally he reappeared, bringing with him some strips of thick cord, which Danby recollected having noticed lying by one of the boxes.

"He must have seen and heard everything as plainly as if he had been standing by us!" he said, in an undertone to Studley. "See here!" he added, turning to Danby, "you know, pretty well, the situation of this house. There's nothing near it for a mile. You might shout for a month, and no one would hear you. If you value your life, you will hold your tongue; and, in order to prevent your making any attempt at escape, I'm going to tie you to this chair."

As he spoke, he took the longest piece of rope, and, passing it quickly round Danby's body, slipped behind the chair and lashed him firmly to it. Danby made no attempt at resistance; he sat there, pale and anxious-looking, but neither so white-faced nor so nervous as Captain Studley, who stood in a half-dazed state, looking on at Heath's proceedings, his wandering hand now plucking at his chin, now beating the tattoo on the table before him, and from time to time opening his mouth as though gasping for breath.

"There!" said Heath, moving round to his old position on the corner of the table; "and now to settle this matter. Walter Danby, you were, on your own avowal, in that room for ten minutes, during which time I have satisfied myself that you must have seen and heard all that transpired here. Is that so?"

"I saw and heard everything," said Danby quietly. His voice was low and flat, quite different from its usual joyous ringing tone, but there was no tremor in it.

"What did you hear?" asked Studley, suddenly turning upon him. "We were only talking business."

"Business!" said Danby. "Is it your business, besides cheating at cards, to deal with stolen goods and dead men's

property? I recognise those jewels as some which I helped your worthy friend there in cataloguing and stowing away. I know them to be part of the proceeds of Mr. Middleham's murder."

As these words left Danby's lips, Heath jumped from his seat, and rapidly passing his hand to his breast, made a stride towards him. But the captain, leaning across the table, caught his friend by the arm, and whispered hurriedly in his ear, "Stop, for God's sake, think what you're doing!"

"It is because I think what I am doing, that I see the need for stopping this lad's tongue," said Heath, between his clenched teeth, his eyes like deep set coals glowing in his head, and his hand still plucking in his breast.

"Stay!" said the captain, still in a whisper, and pulling at Heath's coat. "Come aside for an instant—come over here—let us talk this out, and do nothing rashly. My risk is as great as yours!"

"Is it?" said Heath, who suffered himself to be led to the other side of the room. "I was not aware of that. But anyhow it's great enough. Too great to be played with, I say."

"Don't make it greater," said Studley, with intense earnestness. "For the last month I have lived in a hell upon earth, owing to your rashness! Night and day I have but one thought in my head, one scene before my eyes! Don't create another ghost to haunt me, or I shall go mad!"

"When you have finished raving, perhaps you will say what would you propose to do with this man?" said Heath. "You've heard his avowal of what he knows."

"Do anything with him—anything but one!" said Studley, holding up his trembling hand to emphasise his words. "Make him take a solemn oath never to reveal what he has become acquainted with to-day, and let him go, let him go! And see here: we will let him keep the money which I won of him, and which I daresay he has brought. I will give it up. Let him keep that; it will bind him to us more perhaps—only let him go!"

For a moment Heath stared at his companion without speaking. Then he said, "You seem to have lost your head over this affair! You to talk of ghosts and scenes! you, who for thirty years have passed your life—"

"No!" cried Studley, interrupting, "in everything but *that*! not in *that*!"

"Doesn't your common sense—if any of it remains—tell you that this fellow would

not take any oath; that he could not be bribed by your wretched hundred and fifty pounds? He is brave, honest, and honourable. His whole soul is filled with loathing for us and for our deeds. To denounce us would seem to him his inexorable duty, and he would surely do it. He has seen these diamonds, which have given him a clue to the robbery; and I need not impress upon you that a clue to the robbery is a clue to more!"

"I know it. What you say is quite right; but still—spare his life!"

"His life is in his own hands," said Heath. "If he will swear secrecy, I know him well enough to be certain that he will keep his oath. But if he will not swear——"

"He will! he will!" cried Studley, laying his hand on Heath's breast, and looking appealingly into his face.

"We will see," said Heath, stepping away from him. "But if he will not, I shall ensure my own safety. See here, Danby," he added, suddenly turning round, "you have acknowledged that you have been a spy upon us——"

"That is false," said Danby, in the same calm voice. "I came here by appointment, and walked by accident into that room, from which——"

"We won't bandy words," said Heath. "You saw what we were doing; you recognised those diamonds. You could denounce us to the police. You have us in your power!"

A scornful smile passed across Danby's face. Heath saw it, and spoke quickly. "Morally you have us in your power, but physically you are in ours, from which nothing human can deliver you. Recollect that! Realise the situation. Here in a lone house, far beyond the reach of help, shut up with two men whom you have brought to bay——"

"You need not proceed," said Danby, "I know my fate!" A change in his voice this time, low and creeping. Drops of cold sweat, too, on his forehead, and a twitching of the nostrils and the upper lip.

"You're to have a chance, and you'll take it, won't you?" said Studley. "You'll swear a solemn oath before God, that you'll never say anything about what you've seen or heard, and then we'll let you go! You'll swear it, won't you?"

"No!" cried Danby, "I'll make no bargain with thieves and murderers! Help! help!"

With a sudden jerk he snapped the rope

which bound him to the chair and staggered to his feet, making for the middle door. But Heath, hastily pushing Studley aside, leapt upon Danby and bore him to the ground. The slight lad had little chance against the superior weight and strength of his antagonist, but he knew he was fighting for his life, and he clung so tenaciously to Heath's wrists, that it was perhaps a minute before the latter could free his right hand, to search for the dagger which he carried in his left breast pocket. Even when he had found it, the boy's activity was such, that Heath could not make certain of his blow. He struck out, but Danby interposed his arm, against which the weapon glanced aside; the next instant, the blade was buried in the boy's heart.

At that moment there was upon the air a shriek of horror, loud and piercing, subsiding gradually into a long low wail. Heath, who had risen to his knee, remained transfixed, his mouth rigid, his eyes starting from his head; but Studley, who at the instant the blow was struck, had flung himself upon the table, burying his face between his arms, now raised himself slowly, and listened. It was from the window behind him that the sound had come, the closed window looking on to the garden. Walking as a man in a dream, Studley moved towards the window, threw up the sash and looked out. There was something on the ground below, a dark mass—the body of a woman—of Anne—prostrate, senseless.

Studley staggered back against the wall, pressing his eyes with his hands, as though striving to shut out sight and sense. Anne had seen what had occurred. The fearful crime just committed had been committed in vain, so far as their hope of secrecy was concerned. Another witness was ready to rise up against them, and bear testimony to a deed of blood, which had been perpetrated in her presence. Would Heath deal with Anne as he had dealt with Danby? No, there had been too many horrors, he was her father and would interfere. He would defend her, and at once.

With staggering footsteps Studley sought the door, and was about to open it, when he felt Heath's hand upon his arm. He recoiled instantly. "Stand off," he cried, in a deep hoarse whisper, "don't touch me! there's evidence of your bloody work upon your hands! stand off, and let me go!"

"That is your daughter lying fainting in the garden?" asked Heath. "You are sure of it, sure it is not the servant?"

"It is my daughter! She saw all, she has swooned, and must be seen to at once. I——"

"Stop this fooling!" said Heath, roughly gripping his companion by the arm. "Collect your senses, I say, for you will want them now! She has fainted, and there let her lie. When she recovers she will be too weak and too much dazed to do any harm, and meantime we have plenty to do!"

"Loose your hold on me!" said Studley, shaking himself free. "I can't bear your touch! do you know what you've done?"

"Saved your life and my own," said Heath, "that is to say, if we're only quick in clearing up this place before the servant returns!" As he spoke he moved lightly and with careful footsteps, towards where the body was lying. In the struggle the cloth had been dragged from the table to the floor, and with a portion of this cloth, Heath, in following Studley to the window, had covered the features of the dead. He removed it now, very quietly, and bending down, silently contemplated his cruel work. There was one large clot of blood outside the waistcoat, where the dagger-blade had penetrated, and the coat sleeve against which it had glanced was ripped, and ragged, and dark-stained. The mouth and eyes were partly open, and the fair open brow, and the delicate chiselling round the nostrils, were contracted as though by a sharp spasm of pain. The arm with which the last feeble attempt at defence had been made, was bent across the body, the other hung stiffly by the side.

Heath's face, as he noted these different particulars, was void of expression. In it no rage, no sorrow, neither exultation nor remorse, could be discerned. After a pause he stooped, and taking up the pendent arm, laid his finger on the wrist. Then he dropped it carefully, and regaining his feet, beckoned to Studley to approach.

Studley, however, remained motionless. On Heath's repeating the gesture, he waved his hand angrily, in token of disgust, and then placed it before his eyes.

"Will you come here at once!" said Heath, in a low voice—neither of them had spoken above a whisper since the deed was done—"or do you want the servant to return and alarm the village?"

"Is he—is he quite dead?" asked

Studley, bending forward, and for the first time looking towards the corpse. "What—what are you going to do with it? It must be hidden—where can it be hidden?"

"What's the depth of that pond in the garden?" asked Heath, with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"The pond? about six feet, I think," said Studley. "Young Danby once—good God! I forgot—I mean *he* once plumbed it with a rake, one day, when he was down here."

"That's deep enough," said Heath, "for our present purposes, at all events. I must have something to wrap it in—some matting, or something of that sort. I will see if there is any in the tool-house."

He made as though he would have moved away; but Studley caught him by the coat.

"Don't leave me," he cried; "I cannot be left with it. I will come with you."

The nearest way to the shed in which the tools, which had been used in the cultivation of the garden, ere it was a jungle, were kept, was through the store-room. Before following his companion, Studley cast a rapid glance through the dining-room window, and saw the dark mass still lying there prostrate, motionless. Even then he had a thought of going out to her; but Heath, in a harsh, hoarse whisper, called to him to "Come on!" and he obeyed.

Groping in the dark shed, they found some matting, which was dank and worn, and a sack, at the bottom of which were a few rotting potatoes. This Heath declared would serve their purpose, and emptying it, he carried it to the dining-room, closely followed by Studley.

As they re-entered the house the sinking horror, which had seized upon Studley immediately after the commission of the deed, crept over him again. It was with the greatest difficulty that he could force himself to enter the room. When he did so, he looked at once towards the body, yet started when he saw it, as though not expecting to find it there. He was not, however, allowed any time for meditation, for Heath angrily called him to give him assistance in the dreadful task in which he was engaged.

"I am coming," said Studley, mechanically. Then, pointing, he added,

"Look down; you see the blood has soaked into the carpet."

"We will attend to that later," said Heath. "I have a plan in my head by

which we can keep everybody out of the house for days, giving us plenty of time to take all necessary precautions; but we must get rid of this first, and for that I require your help."

Not much help did Studley give him, though he strove to do what he was told, and with trembling hands carried out the orders which the younger man gave in short, quick, peremptory tones. The head and upper portion of the body were enveloped in the sack; the feet were tied together by the rope with which the victim had been bound to the chair; then, in silence, the two men lifted the ghastly burden between them, and carried it through the store-room into the cold, damp hall, and through the grimly-sculptured doorway out into the night. It was very heavy, and, though his companion had taken by far the heavier portion of the load upon himself, Studley had several times to call him to stop, while he sought to recover breath and wiped away beads of sweat from his forehead with his trembling hands. It was a close, faint, clammy autumn evening, without a breath of air to drive away the thin gray mist rising as ever from the jungle, without a ray of moonlight to penetrate the thick darkness which had already come upon the earth. So, they went on; crushing underfoot the newly fallen leaves, and brushing away the cold dew which stood in thick drops upon the coarse rank grass, until they stopped by the side of the pond. Here, at a sign from Heath, they deposited their burden; Studley, to his horror, being left alone by the side of the corpse while Heath left him to "look for something heavy," as he hoarsely whispered. Presently he reappeared, bearing with him two huge stones which he had pulled out from among the foundations of the dilapidated rustic bridge. One of these he wrapped in his handkerchief, and making a slit in the sack with his penknife, tied the weight firmly to it. At his instructions Studley did the same with the other stone, which he attached to the feet. Then once more raising the body between them, they bore it to the middle of the bridge, some of the decaying balustrades of which Heath cleared away with one vigorous blow, and then, with great difficulty, for Studley's strength by this time was fast failing him, dropped it into the middle of the pond. It sank instantly. The slow, broad ripple, like a sullen smile, spread over the surface of the stagnant water for an instant, and the

hoarse cry of a raven, flapping slowly on its homeward way, was Walter Danby's dirge.

With the noise, the splash, and the gurgle of the water as it closed over the body still in his ears, Studley was standing gazing at the spot where it had disappeared, when Heath shook him roughly by the arm.

"You seem to have forgotten your daughter," he cried, "though you were so anxious about her a few minutes since. Come, and let us see after her." He turned and strode towards the house, Studley following him in silence.

Yes, the father had been right in his surmises; the prostrate form was that of handsome Anne Studley, who had gone forth but two hours since in all the blushing hope and pride of a first love, to give a ready answer to the man who had asked her to link her life with his. Where was his life now?—gone! Where were her hopes?—blighted and wrecked for ever!

"She knows nothing of this now, for she is still senseless," so says Heath, who has lifted her, not without a certain gentleness, and, looking into her face, would have supported her head against his knee had not her father suddenly interposed.

"Do not touch her. I will not have you lay hands upon her!" he cried, passionately.

"Drop that," cried Heath, turning round upon him savagely; "drop it, now and for ever. In this matter, at least, you are as guilty as I am; at all events, the law would make no difference between us; drop all that foolery about my hands and my touch. If my hands did this, it will be my head that will have to plan our safety; and even when it comes to getting this lady upstairs, I imagine you would not be able to manage much without my help. Stand clear now, and I will carry the girl to her room. Once there, I will give you my idea of what should be done." He stooped down, and lifting her in his strong arms as though she had been a child, carried her up the staircase and laid her on the bed.

"Get her clothes off," he said to her father, "while I go downstairs and clear up below there, and get rid of this ugly mark." He pointed to a pale red stain upon his hand, and Studley shuddered. "You must keep your wits about you now," Heath continued, "for in the next twenty-four hours lies all the danger. If we can tide that over we are safe. Undress her, as I told you, and put her into bed,

throw her clothes down here or there in a tumbled heap; I will bring up the brandy from downstairs, and, if you have a medicine chest in the house, it would be best to place it open on the table. I want to give the room the aspect of sudden illness; she cannot remain in her swoon very much longer, and it ought to be done before she recovers."

Studley did as he was bid; his power of will seemed to have deserted him, and he was entirely reliant on his companion. When Heath returned he found that Anne was in bed, her clothes in a disorderly heap on a chair, and a bottle of sal volatile, a basin and a sponge on the table by the bed-side.

"That is right," he said, looking round. "When I was settling things down-stairs I thought this matter through, and have determined what is best to be done. Now attend to me, Ned Studley," he cried, sharply, for Studley was rocking to and fro in his chair, and his eyes were wandering round the room, "attend to me, and remember exactly what I say. It is now half-past nine, in half-an-hour your servant will come back. When you go to the gate to let her in, you must tell her that Miss Studley has been taken ill, that she has gone to bed, and that you are afraid she is attacked with fever. Ask her to come in and take off her bonnet quickly, as your daughter requires watching and nursing, and you want this girl to sit up with her during the night. If I am any judge of human nature the girl will refuse—she is an ignorant, stupid creature—and will be terribly frightened at the mere mention of the word fever. You must make a show of insisting, declaring that if she does not come in at once you will be compelled to get some one else; she will be too glad to accept the alternative, and will go away to her friends, who live here in the village, don't they?"

"But suppose she is not frightened at the notion of the fever, and is willing to come in and do the nursing, what am I to do, then?" asked Studley.

"Take her straight to your daughter's room, and never leave her out of your sight. If Miss Studley comes out of her swoon, anything that she may say you can treat as ravings of delirium. Don't let the girl go into any other part of the house on any pretence whatever. We can settle what is to be done with her when I come back."

"Come back," cried Studley. "Where are you going?"

"Only to the chemist's," said Heath. "It is most necessary that your daughter should have no clear idea of what is passing around her for the next twenty-four hours, so that when she comes out of her swoon it will be necessary to give her a sleeping draught."

"Well, but I have got some laudanum in my room," said Studley.

"That will be very useful to increase the strength of the dose, but it is better for me to go to the chemist's, where I would take care to purchase some other medicine, to give an air of truth to the story which you will tell to the servant, and which she without doubt will immediately spread in the village. In fact, I shall myself give some hint of Miss Studley's illness to the chemist, and ask him what he thinks would be the proper medicine for it."

"Don't be long—don't be long gone, Heath," said Studley, looking up piteously at him, "for Heaven's sake don't be long gone—I cannot bear to be left by myself to-night!"

"There is the brandy," said Heath, with cold contempt, pointing to the bottle which he had placed on the table; "drink a wine-glass of that, and it may restore your courage, but don't muddle your brains, and don't forget my instructions about the servant girl."

A NOBLE FAMILY.

ABOUT the beginning of the present century, and even recollected by old gentlemen about town who were alive when the first Exhibition was opened, lived some three or four members of an Irish noble family, who enjoyed a discreditable notoriety. Lord Barrymore, the eldest, ran a short career, and bore the nickname of Hellgate. His brother, the Honourable Henry Barry, was lame, or club-footed, and was dubbed Cripple-gate; while the Hon. and Rev. Augustus Barry, even less reputable than the other two, went by the name of Newgate, for the rather illogical reason that he had been a tenant of every jail in the kingdom save that one. There was a sister, of whom little is known save that she became Lady Milfort, and that from her ready and copious use of oaths she received from the refined lips of the Prince Regent the sobriquet of Billingsgate.

"His highly polished mind," says one of the toadies, speaking in praise of

the eldest brother, "received its first classical embellishments under the successful tuition of the Rev. Mr. Tickell, at Wargrave"—a gentleman, it may be added, who received the nickname Profligate. "At the age of fourteen he was removed to Eton, where his erudition was confirmed. . . . Discretion had planted her choicest seeds in his understanding; but he was destroyed ere the fertility and richness of the soil became palpable by a full harvest, acceptable to wisdom and to honour. . . . He was bursting hourly from the chrysalis, and would have been soon in full beauty, wing, and request." These are the words of Williams, better known as Antony Pasquin, who belonged to what was an element in the society of the time, the buffooning libeller who made a subsistence out of the terrors of the indiscreet and timorous. This fellow was a retained jester at the fast lord's house, required to promote fun and make his employer and the company merry. His coadjutor was Edwin, the actor; and it is admitted that both earned their wage.

Lord Hellgate distinguished himself by bringing a thousand pounds pocket money to school. He came into a fortune of ten thousand a year, which in a short space of time he had contrived to charge with debts amounting to a couple of hundred thousand pounds, leaving him but a couple of thousand a year to live upon. His extravagance took the most fantastic shapes. His hunting retinue was like the French king's, and he went out with four Africans, dressed magnificently, who played on the French horn during the chase. All the low scum of boxers and cockfighters were in his train. At the same time he delighted in cricketing, then in its infancy, and even held a commission in a militia regiment, where he contrived to fulfil his duties respectably. There was no doubt that he had natural gifts and a good spirit, which, if directed to better things, might have helped him to make a figure. He could turn verses and had a decided literary taste; and was so far musical, that, on returning home from a new opera he could give an idea of the overture. "His lordship," says a pleasant actor who knew him, "was the most eminent compound of contrarieties, the most singular mixture of genius and folly, of personal endowment and moral obliquity. Alternating between the gentleman and the blackguard, the refined wit and the most vulgar bully, he was equally well known in St. Giles's and

St. James's. His lordship could fence, dance, drive, or drink, box or bet, with any man in the kingdom. He could discourse slang as trippingly as French; relish porter after port; and compliment her ladyship at a ball with as much ease and brilliance as he could bespatter a blood in a cider cellar." He was highly popular, the friend and companion of the Prince of Wales and of all the fast men of the time.

The stories told of his freaks give a good idea of the pastimes of the fast man of the day. The most harmless of these took the shape of what are called "sells." Some of them were of the usual "fast" kind; he would take some "spirited companions," and going by night to some village or country town, shift all the various signs of the public-houses, transposing, say, the King's Head and the Red Lion, to the confusion of the owners and their customers. Often, as he and his brothers were driving in a hackney coach, they would imitate the frantic screams of a woman struggling, "Murder, murder! Let me go! &c.," when the passers by would be attracted, follow, and finally stop the coach to rescue the sufferer. The fast lord and his friends would descend, fall on the interposers, who were quite bewildered to find there was no female in the coach, and administer a sound thrashing on the public highway. They would then proceed on their journey.

"Lord Barrymore's fondness for eccentricities," we are told, "ever engaged his mind. It was all the same, he was always in high spirits, thinking of what fun he should have during the day." With a ready versatility he knew how to secure this pastime as occasion offered. Thus having a very high phaeton which he would drive home after a night revel in town, he would whip right and left as he proceeded down the narrow Feather-bed Lane, destroying the windows on both sides, delighted with the noise as he heard them crash. This he called "fanning the daylights." Or he would be driving with a guest and his wild brother "Newgate" in his chaise-and-four, returning to his country place, when, after some halt, the guest would find himself whirling along at a terrific pace, and discover that the postilions were in the ramble behind, and that the two brothers had taken their place.

Some new prank of his was always the subject of conversation. If he met an ill-conditioned waggoner on the road, who

would not give way, his lordship would descend to fight it out; if the winner, he would present the man with a guinea, if the loser, he would shake hands good humouredly. At Newmarket, he would burst into a group asking, "Who wants a horse that can walk five miles an hour, trot eighteen, and gallop twenty?" "I do," was the eager reply from many quarters. "Then," said his lordship, "if I hear there is any such animal to be sold, I will let you know." At Brighton, he fitted a coffin to the back of his servant, taking the bottom off so as to leave room for the man's feet. This was carried with great solemnity to a gentleman's house in the Steyne, and left against the hall door. When the maid opened the door and saw this apparition, she shrieked and fainted away, and the family rushing down, a pistol was discharged which penetrated the coffin barely an inch above the servant's head. Did a particular kind of mild beer run short at dinner, three chaises were sent off in different directions, charged to look for liquor, each returning after some hours with a cask inside.

But it was down at his own house at Wargrave that he had full scope for his humour. There he would collect the band of roysterers and "flappers," and butts, who furnished him with diversion, and there he was able to indulge his passion for the stage, building a handsome theatre, with saloons and other rooms adjoining. He brought down an eminent Covent Garden mechanist, who exhausted his skill in scenes, traps, and other contrivances, so that such embarrassing works as pantomimes could be brought out successfully. Here a series of sterling comedies such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Every Man in his Humour*, were performed, supported by such amateurs of reputation as Captain Wathen, Mr. Wade, and professionals such as Palmer, Bannister, Johnstone, Incledon, Munden, and others. Captain Wathen and the host excelled in *Archer* and *Scrub*, and were painted in these characters. Delpini, a well-known pantomimist, directed behind the scenes, and took the leading part in the pantomime; the "favourite Pas Russe, as performed at the Italian Opera, being danced by Lord Barrymore and Mr. Delpini." Nothing could exceed the reckless extravagance with which this hobby was carried out. The professionals were asked en bloc, and allowed to gratify every whim. All the caterers and mechanists

were specially brought from town, and given *carte blanche*.

In the year 1788, the prince was induced to come down, occupying a splendid mansion close by; Lord Barrymore, whose house was too small, providing cooks and the rest of the entertainment. The performance did not begin till nine o'clock; all the rank and fashion of the county were present. The prologue was written at short notice by a son of Judge Blackstone, who roused his "fuddled" intellects for the purpose, by wrapping a wet towel round his head.

There was always a "full dress rehearsal," to which the rustics were admitted, and all the rows of the pit were duly filled with red cloaks and smock frocks. For the same reason the noble manager sometimes took the tickets himself, wrapped up in a cloak so that he should not be recognised. He used to tell how one of the farmers presented a ticket that was not available for a particular night, and how, indignant at not being admitted, he threatened to tell James the footman, and get him sent away. The owner of the theatre on this, affecting to look discomfited, the rustic relented. "Coom," he said, "you seem a good sort of a decent sort o' man, and I tell you what, if you'll be agreeable, vy I'll be so. Here's a shilling for 'ee to let I go in." The host took the shilling, and enjoyed telling the story, though, perhaps, he did not quite relish the remark of the rustic, when he was told to whom he had given the shilling. "Vell, an he a lord, vot care I! Odds rabbit it: un he wanted to be treated like a gemman, vy didn't he tell me he was a gemman?" The wondering remarks too of the clowns in the pit were specially to his Lordship's humour. Indeed this taste, though not of a bright quality, is found to have directed all his amusements, and in some degree redeems them from mere vulgar debauchery. He had the humour of his countrymen, or the humour they used to have. In this spirit, when the play was over, there was nothing he enjoyed so much as disguising himself and a friend for the purpose of following the audience home to the villages, and picking up their criticisms, which he retailed with delight for the performers at supper.

At these carnivals, however, the dramatic element was the least important. Fun and jollity of the most outrageous kind was what were chiefly sought. "I have known the little cottage," says

Angelo, one of his adherents, "crowded, with at least five-and-twenty inmates, most of them men of talents, either as poets, players, singers, or celebrated as *bons vivants*." Everything was wild, disorderly, and irregular. Nearly all this band had to sleep, or rather lie down, in two small rooms, distinguished by the names of the upper and lower barracks. The night was devoted to orgies, and no one was allowed to retire until five o'clock in the morning, when sleep was allowed. Any one who stole away before that time, did so on the certainty of being "drawn," and receiving a Bacchanalian visit from the whole society.

Every morning a council of the roysterers was held, to devise some humour for the day. In this duty Pasquin and Edwin were invaluable. Thus, on some sultry day, it would be proposed that the revels should be *al fresco*. The cooks were marshalled, and put under the direction of "Jack Edwin," though any one who suggested a novelty became the hero of the hour. Some of these suggested freaks however, were of a scandalous kind, and on one hot day it was actually proposed that the party should form a procession to the next village, and enter it *en chemise*.

The patronage of this convivial lord was, of course, as precarious as convivial patronage usually is, though his good-nature made him tolerant enough. He had taken a fancy to "a good-natured, simple little squireen," who was dubbed Farmer Stone, and who was taken up to London and duly initiated into the ways of the town. Invited to stop a few days at Wargrave, he remained two months, when his lordship, growing tired of him, said to him, with a simple bluntness, "Be off; go to the devil!" The other replied in his country dialect, "No, doant you, my lord, send oi back. Let un stay a little." "Well, if you'll say a good thing you shall stay a week more." The dialogue is worth noting, as showing what was considered effective repartee in such society. "Well, then, I wishes as how I was the brother next to you, and that you was double-fettered in Newgate, and that you was to be hanged to-morrow!" "D—d good," exclaimed his lordship in delight. "Give me your hand: that is the best thing I ever heard you say. So to-morrow I shall take you to town, and you shall stay a month with me."

One development of the Wargrave humour was an institution known as the

"Bothering Club," whose proceedings, which appear to have been of a diverting kind, have been described by one of the guests:—

"This" he says, "was instituted for the purpose of playing off a confederate annoyance upon some stranger guest, invited for the purpose. Suppose a resident at the house, for instance, sent an invitation, by the connivance of his lordship, to some tavern companion, a grave, topping shopkeeper in London, to come and pass a few days as a guest at his lordship's table, and to partake of the festivities at Wargrave. The person invited was received with great ceremony, and treated in the most courteous manner throughout the first day. On the second, someone, perhaps Anthony Pasquin or the younger Edwin, two wicked, witty ministers of his lordship's waggeries, would hatch up some fallacious charge against him, to place him in a ridiculous point of view to the other guests, most of whom were confederates in the hoax. One present would begin, 'Pray, Mr. Higginbottom, will you allow me to take wine with you?' 'Sir, with great pleasure; but my name is Benson.' 'You are a wag, sir,' was the reply. 'Come, let us hob and nob, sir; but, 'pon my soul, you are so like Mr. Higginbottom, my neighbour, in Elbow-lane, that—excuse me—I could almost have sworn—' 'No, sir, I assure you I know no gentleman of that name.'

"At this moment a confederate enters, and, after bowing and apologising for being so late at dinner, begins to tell his lordship the cause of his delay on the road, when he suddenly exclaims, 'Ah, my old friend Higginbottom! Well, this is a pleasure indeed!'

"Indeed, sir, you have the advantage of me; I am not Mr. Hig—hig—what's his name?' Then a loud laugh at Mr. Benson's expense, when he appeals to his friend who invited him thither, but he has purposely left the table. He then throws himself upon the protection of his lordship, who gravely observes, 'Sir, appearances are against you; your friend has disappeared, and—I know not what to think.' Benson, bewildered, begins to asseverate that he is identically 'John—Jabus—Ben—son;' when another adds to his embarrassment by declaring, 'Why, Higginbottom, you are smoked.' 'What do you mean, sir?' 'Why, sir, ha, ha, ha, that you are Isaac Higginbottom,

mouse-trap and nutmeg-grater manufacturer in Elbow-lane, and the greatest wag in all London.' And these confederate jokers continue their play upon the worthy cit, artfully plying him with wine, until the fumes of the grape, working with his confusion, bemuddle his brain, so that he ultimately forgets whether he is Benson or Higginbottom.

"Another common frolic at the table, when strangers were present, was for one of the prime wits of the waggish coterie to assume the office of public accuser; when, in the midst of the banquet, some ludicrous or preposterous charge was preferred with mock gravity against some one of the guests. The accused, not dreaming of the roguish confederacy by which he is surrounded, indignant at the accusation, flies into a rage, talks of his honour and reputation, when that arch-traitor to decorum, Anthony Pasquin, exclaims, 'Sir, I can believe anything against a man of your taste.' 'What do you mean, sir, by your daring insinuation?' 'Nay, do not bounce, sir,' retorts Pasquin, with insufferable calmness. 'What—and I will appeal to the company—what is that gentleman not capable of, who shaves himself with the razor with which his wife cut her own throat?'

"Enraged past endurance, the gentleman would leave the room, when the door is locked, and everyone vociferates, 'Put it to the ballot.' The verdict is recorded and read, namely, 'That a man capable of such an offence against good taste must be sent to Coventry;' and the confusion and brawling that ensued left the accused no alternative but to quit the house at midnight, or to enter into the frolic and ribaldry in self-defence, and brave it out by becoming as noisy and as inebriated as the rest of the roaring madcaps."

On other nights this took an even more diverting shape. One of the gentlemen was called on for the favourite Wargrave song, "The Brogue Makers." The unsuspecting guest being prepared to expect a treat of the most humorous and musical kind, the vocalist, after apologising for hoarseness, began in a very loud key, "There were three jolly brogue makers," when he was interrupted by one of the guests, who declared that "he was not in tune." Quietly protesting against the rudeness of stopping a gentleman in his song, who was at best only trying to gratify the company, he began again, only to be stopped at the same place by another

guest, who used even harder terms. The stranger—who was growing impatient—would here indignantly interpose, and appeal to the host on the gross impropriety and coarseness of these proceedings, with whom Lord Barrymore would agree, and declaring it was indecent, request the vocalist to try again, if only to oblige him and his friend. On this the song was recommenced, to be once more interrupted in the same place, and in the grossest manner, by another guest. On this, the visitor losing all patience, would turn on, and generally apply some angry epithet to the person who was destroying the harmony of the evening. This was promptly resented by the rebuked party, who rose to chastise the guest. Both parties began to fall to, when the host explained that this was a piece of "humbug," and a roar of laughter drowned expostulation and anger.

His lordship was not exempt from some singular habits. On arriving at a strange house for the night, his servant's duty was to sew the top of the sheets and blankets together, to prevent the latter touching his face, which, we are told, was "delicately irritable," while the windows were always carefully hung with blankets three deep, to exclude the light.

Living then this strange existence, turning night into day, always in quest of "fun and jollity," this noble roysterer was destined to run but a short course. His death was sudden and of a very tragic kind. He was at Rye with his regiment—and curious to say, he was considered a very painstaking and efficient officer—whence he and some French prisoners were to be sent to Deal under escort. He applied specially for the duty of commanding the party, no doubt hoping for some "fun," or excitement. When they got outside Folkstone, the commander, always goodnatured, halted at a convenient public-house, where he treated the whole party with beer and cheese. He was in great spirits, interchanged jokes with McBride, a jovial admiral, and delighted the landlady by chalking up the score behind the bar, in the usual publican's hieroglyphics, giving as he did so, an impersonation of "Hob," a favourite theatrical character. Being tired of marching, he got into his carriage, which was following, wishing to smoke.

He had his gun with him, which he had used as he marched along, to shoot any, stray rabbits and gulls he

might see on the road-side. Lighting his pipe, he handed his gun to his man, who held it awkwardly between his knees, when, as the good-natured master with his pipe was pointing out to him the coast of France, bidding him note how clear it was, the piece suddenly exploded, lodging the contents in his head. He lived but half an hour, groaning terribly all the while, and expired amid the lamentations even of the French prisoners. A cynic might find an appropriateness in the scene of his last moments—that public-house where he had been so cheerful but a few minutes before. He was no more than twenty-three.

He was succeeded by his brother the "Honourable Henry," known as the lame lord or "Cripple-gate." This gentleman, with the worthy parson, were said to be accountable for all the excesses of the elder brother, encouraging him in every conceivable way. The new lord had not the same bonhomie, nor the same love of fun. His humour took a very low shape, as will be seen from the specimens recorded. Mr. Richardson, who knew both, describes this second brother as a strongly built aristocratic looking person, with a considerable share of sense, and such knowledge of the world, as is derived from mixing with the least amiable of its inhabitants. His excesses and oddities also became the public talk. He was considered very amusing, but as Mr. Raikes says, from his want of principle as well as his want of good taste, was avoided by persons of his own station.

One evening after dinner at Windsor, he got into discussion with a Colonel Cowper, as to the practicability of taking the castle, each illustrating his plans by wine-marks on the table. The colonel, a quiet, inoffensive man, was seen to have clearly the best of the argument, when the earl, mystified and half tipsy, grew mischievous, and exclaimed, "You have forgotten the River Thames," and flung a tumbler of water in his face. A scene of confusion followed; but the plea of intoxication was allowed. This was brutal enough; but in the same key was his treatment of an old officer, which was considered at the time a good specimen of jovial manners. Lord Barrymore, it should be premised, had a favourite convivial song, the burden of which, "chip-chow, cherry-chow, fol lol de riddle low," was often rapturously chorused by his associates; and the old general, Sir

Alured Clarke, who had served in America, was inclined to bore people with the rehearsal of his campaigns. The wild lord affected a desire to learn something of the Indians, and asked him "What sort of tribe were the Chip-Chows?" The old general, taken in by the sound, began at once to describe a tribe that was noted for its cruelty. With more interest still, his questioner then asked, "Who were the Cherry-Chows? Of what kind were they?" These were described as a cruel and barbarous race, who were besides known for the habit of eating their prisoners. On this the earl burst into a horse laugh, and with a noisy oath asked, "And what do you think of the Tol-lol-de-riddle-lows?" On which there was a roar from the boon companions assembled. But the old general, though made the butt of this gross buffoonery, behaved with dignity, and had the best of the joke. He rose from his seat, and as he quitted the room, said, "My lord, during my travels I have met many savages, but no such savage as yourself!"

Strange to say, this lord generally escaped chastisement, on account of the buffoonery that was mixed up with these insults. He had indeed a duel with a fat Mr. Howarth, at Brighton. A large crowd attended to see the sport, and was convulsed with laughter when the latter stripped himself to the waist, having an idea that portions of cloth, &c., were often driven in by the bullet. This comic spectacle took away the serious element, and after a random shot the affair terminated.

"Cripple-gate" married a girl in Ireland of no family, but whose sister made a conquest of an old French Emigré—the Duke of Castries. He gradually sank into distress and difficulties, his house was assailed by bailiffs, whom, it is said, when he gave a dinner, he used to dress up in the family livery. He had finally to retire to France, where he died in great poverty, his brother-in-law, the Duke of Castries, now restored to his estates and honours, giving him shelter. "He was, with all his follies, a man," says one who knew him, "of a generous nature. He had nothing mean in his nature, and preserved his independence of spirit amid great temptations to subservency." One of his claims to fashionable reputation, was his having invented "The Tiger," the smart juvenile servant who, in those days, was seated beside the owner of the cab, and not standing behind. This tiger was

Alexander Lee, whose name was many years ago found on popular ballads, and whose history, like all in connection with the old "fast" life, was disastrous. He rose from this low position to be joint lessee of the opera, when he formed an unfortunate attachment to Mrs. Waylett, the fascinating warbler of "Buy a Broom!" which amounted to an infatuation. This lady he married, and ruined himself to satisfy her caprices. When she died he removed from the lodgings they occupied; but, wandering about from place to place, he could find no rest, and returned to the same rooms. He locked himself in, and was found a corpse, doubled up on a chair beside the bed on which his wife had a short time before expired.

It only remains now to say something of the career of the Hon. and Rev. Augustus Barry. "I believe," says one of his friends cautiously, "neither the nobility nor the church derived much advantage from his being a member of both classes. He had the curious faculty of exhibiting himself as a perfect gentleman or a perfect blackguard. It would be invidious to say in which of the two characters he most commonly appeared." He had his distinction, like his worthy brothers, and, as we have seen, was said to have been an inmate of every gaol in England, with the exception of Newgate. He, too, died in poverty and obscurity. Of Billingsgate, the sister of the three brothers, little more is known, save the faculty of uttering oaths before described.

Altogether, it must be confessed, the Barrymores were a remarkable family.

EARTH-ROSES.

A GARDEN! Gladder than gay June it seemed;
The slanting shafts of summer sunshine streamed
Through leafy rifts of closely clustered trees.

The lone Hesperides
Were warded by no broader, branchier wall,
Than those low-sweeping elms, and poplars tall,
And columned cedar-groves majestic,

That sentinel'd that space;
Making a solemn silence in the place,
By tender throstle-flutings broken only.

Yet nothing sad or lonely
Was that serene secluded garden close,
Where the glad rose
Made summer shine and sweetness everywhere.

And two of happy guise were couched there,
Amidst those roses; roses ripely red
As Hebe's wine-draught, roses cloudy white
As is the snowiest foam that ever fled
Before a flouting wind on frolic seas,

Tost by the Nereides
In their wild dances. Roses of all hues
That June's alchemic sleight may interfuse
To deck her darling flower. There was no spot
In that embowered close, where clambered not

Or trailed some twinéd tuft, or branchéd spray,
Of rare rose blossoms. Every leafy way
Was curtained with white drifts and crimson bosses
Of radiant roses.

In such wild wise that their tumultuous thronging
Stirred at the heart of joy a subtle longing,
Unsearched, unspeakable, for some rare pleasure,
Kin to their lavish lusciousness, in measure
Stintless as their profusion, and of sweetness
Matching their fine completeness
Of still elusive odour, that no draught
May wholly drain.

"Hath any ever quaff

The rose-balm whom the rose-balm satisfies?"

So whispered he,
Sleeeking the soft head prone upon his knee.
From her white breast's embrace a rose she drew,
Red as Aurora's dawn-flush, and, inhaling
Its fragrance keenly, as though through and through
Its full-unfolded petals she would draw
Full answer, veiled her lustrous eyes, and, paling,
Spake mournfully as one who sightless saw
What sense is blind to. "Earth-love's change-
less law

Speaks through earth's roses. They must fade
and fail

For all their sweetness. Yet do they exhale
Suggestions fair, unspeakable promises,
To souls that may abide the bitter stress
Of mutability.

The rose's balm shall never satisfy,
Till all its fine unfathomable sweetness—
A shoreless sea where the last sense may stray,
A world where wordless thought may soar and play
Tetherless as young love in its first vision—
Breathe in its home land, some rare realm Elysian
Of kindred calm completeness,

Where all is as the rose-scent, sweet as love,
Deep as the heart's desire, deathless as light,
And purer than the silver shaft of night,
Say, hath the earth-rose no such word for thee
From the rose-realm above?"

So spake she, lifting that red-hearted blossom,
Fresh from her ruddier lips' light pressure. He
Stooping as fain to smell
Afresh its fragrance, leaf from leaf it fell
And strewn with scattered crimson her snow-
cinctured bosom.

POPPY.

IN NINE CHAPTERS.

I.

"WELL, my dear, do as you like!"

"That means, I am to do it at my peril."

"I hope there's no peril in the case."

"Well, under the pain of your displeasure."

"I can't be expected to feel pleasure; but why bandy words, Poppy? You know my opinion. I don't want to tyrannise; perhaps a woman's tact is finer than ours in such matters. We are apt to be a little rough and coarse in our estimate of human nature."

"And so you begin by showing your roughness and coarseness to your wife? But, remember, Max, I never promised to play Desdemona to your Othello!"

"Othello! psha!" said Sir Charles Maxwell, impatiently, as he turned away

and took up his hat. "Don't think I am so ridiculous as to be jealous of your cousin. But there are other things besides jealousy; the conveniences, the——"

"Humbug!" said Poppy, curtly; "I'm not going to cut Charlie, to please anybody; not even you, Max."

"There's no question of cutting, my dear. I believe Captain Graham is dying of a broken heart; if you can afford a man in such a situation any consolation, pray do. My feelings ought not, under the tragic circumstances, to be considered for a moment."

"I hate you, when you try to be sarcastic, Sir Charles," said his wife, with a smile that Charles Maxwell didn't altogether like.

He adored Poppy; but he didn't adore her manners, which certainly had not that repose which marks the caste of Vere de Vere. He had married her, though she was only the daughter of his old private tutor; and though many a skilful mother and ingenuous daughter had shown him what a fine fellow they thought him, and how glad they would have been to have ministered, as fireside angels, at his opulent hearth.

"But you see I've come back to you, after all, Poppy," said he, as they lounged back together, engaged lovers, from the snailly old vicarage summer-house.

"And why not?" Poppy asked, shortly. She didn't approve of his pluming himself on his constancy in this complacent fashion. "'After all' what?" she said. "'After all' who, or whom? There ought not to be 'all,' or 'any,' if it comes to that. Why should a man flirt and flutter round a dozen girls, and then give himself a vast amount of credit because he comes back to the one he liked first?"

"And best, Poppy."

"Of course you can say so; you're bound to say it, I suppose. They always do in books, you know."

"And you, Poppy. Have you never flirted since I bid you good-bye in the snow, when your dear pretty little nose was so red?"

"You should have forgotten the red nose, Sir Charles."

"But I haven't. You said it was the frost, but I know you had been crying. By the way, don't say 'Sir Charles,' it's ridiculous now we are engaged people; call me Charlie."

"I couldn't do that."

"Oh yes you could; but what were we

saying? Of course, I remember now; have you never flirted, Poppy, since then?"

He was very much in love with her, and he wished she would be a little more sentimental; it was so nice to hear (though you might have been a garçon volage yourself), that a dear pretty little girl like Poppy had been languishing amongst the buttercups and daisies, and watching the sunset, and wondering if your whiskers had grown, and kissing that stud you lost in the garden, all the time you had been away.

"I?" said Poppy, standing still on the gravel path, just in front of the old apricot trees, and facing straight round at her lover, so that he could not but think what a charming picture she made in the afternoon sunshine, with the mellow old pink wall and the tender green leaves for a background, her white dress and pretty daisy complexion seeming to have absorbed all the light into themselves, as she raised her head a little higher than usual. "I? why I have never ceased to flirt, Sir Charles. Papa always says he can't remember when I began it; and yet he declares he recollects my being short-coated!"

It may be doubted whether Sir Charles at all understood to what sumptuary mysteries Poppy referred. But his face became suddenly overcast. So, after all, he might just as well have stayed away. She would never have missed him or fretted at his silence. And some of those girls had certainly been very pretty; not so piquante, perhaps, as Poppy; but, then, a life-long course of startling might not be altogether so agreeable as when it came with the shock of a surprise. To resign yourself to being startled is a paradoxical state of being which no sane man could contemplate with equanimity. He wished she would be serious for a moment; she seemed to take all his love so much for granted, and to care so little whether he were pained or pleased by what she said. But he did her injustice; Poppy's quick sympathetic nature felt in an instant that all the sunshine had died out of his face. She had not meant to hurt him; why this would never do; he ought to know her better; as if the kind of flirtations she had had could matter! But at this thought certain remembrances arose in Poppy's mind, and sent the bright pink colour flushing up into her face.

"Sir Charles," she said, walking on, and speaking more quietly than she had yet done. "I did not mean to offend you;

you have been away so long; you have forgotten that it is my way just to blurt things out. Papa always understands, I never have to explain to papa."

"But I am not your father, Poppy; and when you tell me that you have flirted with every man you came near——"

"I did not say that."

"And that you have never ceased flirting——" He was so really hurt that a sharp pang went through Poppy's innocent guilty heart. She, who picked all the snails off the gravel path to put them on the fruit trees; who fed the mice until she drove the housekeeper to give distracted warning, "all along of Miss Poppy's unconscionable doings," how could she hear the pain in her lover's voice, and not feel sorry? With one of those impulses which made her the loveable being she was, she turned suddenly to him, and throwing her arm with warm frankness round his neck, she cried——

"Don't be angry with me. If I have flirted——ever so little——I have never loved anyone else but you."

"Darling!" cried Sir Charles, in ecstasy, with his arm round her waist, and her head on his shoulder. But Poppy was a fine tall girl, not one of your twigs or slips; and as she so stood, feeling very much confused by the novelty of the situation, her eyes rose above the level of Maxwell's shoulder, and from a distant angle of the garden, she beheld her reverend father approaching, accompanied by the last person she at that moment desired to see.

"Charlie!" she exclaimed, trying to wriggle herself out of Sir Charles's arm.

"Angel!" whispered Sir Charles in his newly-found rapture, thinking the note of admiration was all for him.

But Poppy's slim figure had slipped out of his clasp; and almost before he knew it, he found himself confronted by the two gentlemen.

"You remember," said Mr. Hardwicke, speaking in a full clerical voice, "you remember Sir Charles, my nephew Captain Charles Graham."

Sir Charles bent one joint of his spine; Captain Graham bent one and a half of his; "that confounded prig has turned up again," was his mental comment, as he thus adapted his vertebrae to the circumstances.

"Sorry that scamp is in the neighbourhood," thought Sir Charles, as his dorsal column recovered the perpendicular.

Then they all three walked solemnly down the broad gravel path, Mr. Hardwicke discoursing mellifluously, for the whole party.

II.

THE wedding-day was fixed, and all Poppy's friends were immensely enthusiastic over the matter. "Such a capital match!" they all said; and so it was, but Poppy got sick of the phrases.

"Why is it capital?" she asked. "Because I have no money and Sir Charles has plenty? Don't make out I'm mercenary——besides, it's not flattering to him."

So they understood that they were to moderate their transports. In conclave assembled they still continued to envy the girl's good fortune, and to wonder at the man's infatuation. "Such an insignificant little creature!" said one. "And no manner!" added another. "What can have possessed him?" cried a third. "Run after as he was!" chimed in a fourth. And so the chorus went on, only as Poppy didn't hear it, it did not trouble her. The engagement was so short, that the course of her love could not run otherwise than smoothly. She had no mother to stand out for etiquette, or to entrench herself behind the trousseau. "Just get a few things Poppy, dear," said Sir Charles, "though I declare I shall always love you in your old white gown best, and we can pick up the rest of the paraphernalia in Paris, as we go along."

What a programme, Paris! new gowns! Theatres! Lace! the Champs Elysées, Versailles! and Poppy, who had never been beyond the borders of Berkshire, felt as though she could scarcely wait for the wedding-day.

"You seem to care more about seeing all these things than about being alone with me," said her lover, rather ruefully, after Poppy had been prattling by the hour of her plans for sight-seeing, and theatre-going.

"Of course I do, in a sense," Poppy answered, ignorant of offence, "but, you see, we are only going to be in Paris a fortnight, and I shall be alone with you all the rest of my life!"

"And is that such a terrible prospect?" asked Sir Charles, reproachfully.

"Terrible? Pray don't twist my words in that way, Max; don't you wish me to enjoy myself in Paris? What do you think? Shall we see the Empress? Oh, you must contrive that I shall see her!"

It was too early in their courtship for him to be otherwise than enchanted with all she said and did, and yet she jarred upon him, somehow. He told himself that if he were not in love with her, he should often be very vexed at her sayings and doings; never guessing that the very fact of his being in love made those sayings and doings provoking to him, whereas, to an indifferent person they would themselves have been indifferent.

One small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, had arisen on their horizon. Sir Charles had been grievously hurt, when he found that Poppy's exclamatory "Charlie!" had been addressed over his shoulder to the distant vision of her cousin, and not, as he had fondly hoped, to himself.

"I know now, why you won't call me Charlie," he said to Poppy next day; "it's because of your cousin."

And Poppy nodded her head in acquiescence, eyeing him wistfully all the time.

"I'm sorry to see that fellow hanging about," Sir Charles remarked, a few days later. "When's he going?"

"He isn't hanging about," Poppy answered with some asperity; "he's just as much on his legs as you are."

Sir Charles looked shocked; but it did not become a lover to reprove the lady of his affections for the freedom of her speech; he would regard her phraseology as parliamentary, and overlook it. But when they were married Poppy must really reform.

"And besides," she went on, "this is his home, as much as he can have a home; he comes here for his long leave when he's nothing better to do. You don't want papa to turn him out, do you?" And Poppy, who was very clannish, faced round after her custom, and looked straight into Sir Charles's handsome face.

"No! I don't want him turned out, darling," said her lover meekly; "only, when he sees he's not wanted, he might have the decency to take himself off; and we don't want him here, do we, dear?"

"Speak for yourself, Max!" cried Poppy angrily, giving his arm, which was approaching to caress her, an angry push. "'Love me, love my dog.' That's my motto. I haven't so many relations that I can spare Charlie; and it isn't nice of you to begrudge him to me!"

"Bravo!" cried Captain Graham, from behind the bench where they were sitting. "Take a cigar, Sir Charles?"

"Beast!" said Sir Charles to himself; but he only declined the cigar with politeness, and stalked stiffly away.

III.

"LISTENERS never hear any good of themselves," said Poppy, eyeing the intruder with displeasure.

"Then I'm an exception, my dear," said Charlie Graham. "I heard the best of myself, when I heard your sharp little tongue defending me."

"Besides it's mean."

"Well; I'm not above a meanness or two," said Captain Graham, calmly (and to tell the truth he wasn't). He sat down in Sir Charles's place, and stretched his legs out, and held his cigar between his teeth, and his hands in his pockets, as, with his head thrown back, he talked to his little cousin.

Somehow, Poppy didn't approve of his freedom of speech and manner, but she didn't know how to make him sit up, and draw himself into a more decorous position. He was ever so old; years older than Sir Charles. He had played with Poppy, teased her, brought her sashes and bonbons as far back as her memory could reach. He had kissed her, and patronised her, and asserted all the privileges of mature cousinship over her; how, then, was she to call upon him suddenly to treat her with the respect due to the dignity of the future Lady Charles?

There was a pause. Then Poppy said, imploringly. "Do go away, Charlie!"

"What? Because of Othello?"

"Don't be foolish; it's nothing of the kind."

"Oh! indeed."

"But as you are here, Charlie, I may as well ask you not to kiss me night and morning; you know I'm not a little girl now."

"Ah!"

"And people might think it odd."

"Might they?"

"Yes! that is if they saw it; though of course, there's nothing in it."

"Of course not."

"Don't keep repeating what I say, Charlie; say something of your own."

"But perhaps I might say something you wouldn't like."

"Why should you?"

"Well, of course, I shouldn't if it comes to that. The canons of courtesy call every man a brute who annoys any woman. And you, Poppy, you were not very complimentary just now, when

you ranked me amongst the brute creation?"

"I?" cried Poppy indignantly.

"Yes! you called me a dog. 'Love me, love my dog!' was what you said. Sir Charles appeared to think it exacting that your canine favourites were to share the privileges of his affection. I, being one of the dogs, to whom you politely referred, declare at once that I have no desire to be loved by Sir Charles. A dog is a faithful beast, my dear Poppy; he will take kicks from an old mistress, perhaps, but he may turn and bite a new master. I don't want to snarl; I don't want to show my teeth; you have called me a dog, but I don't want you to degrade me into a malicious cur; but if I have a virtue, Poppy, it is faithfulness. That's a better word than fidelity. And I should be unfaithful, my dear girl, if I didn't tell you that you're making a most confounded matrimonial mistake!"

"Charlie! how dare you?"

"All that a dog may dare, I do. Who dares do more—"

But Poppy had left him.

IV.

AFTER this, Poppy rather avoided Graham. Sir Charles ceased almost to be jealous, and things went more smoothly. There had been a period in Poppy's existence which she would now fain have forgotten. It had been after Sir Charles had wooed and ridden away, or, in plain words, after that farewell parting when "love" was "enough," and no thought of mathematical results had as yet dawned on their foolish young minds. Whilst Sir Charles was doing the grand tour, enjoying his London seasons, his summer at Baden, his Easter at Rome, and the worship at his altar of Mayfair devotees, Captain Graham had perceived that Poppy was a beautiful young woman. At first the discovery came upon him as a surprise; dismay succeeded, and in turn gave place to that sort of leisurely pleasure with which a man of the world, who has seen many beauties blossom out into life, bloom their brief day, and fade away into maternity and butchers' bills, is able to look upon a charming specimen of the sex he adores en gros, but is rather too blasé to care much about en détail. Poppy would sit upon his knee and pull his whiskers no more! Well, these had been charming diversions in their way; but

every age has its pleasures: and perhaps, better than the riding to Banbury Cross and the whisker pulling, was the sight of Poppy in her white gown, with a blue sash round her pretty waist, and her daisy complexion blooming delicately and coolly in the soft summer breezes. Charming, too, was Poppy when, like her flower namesake, she flamed out in scarlet glories of winter hood and petticoat and berry-wreathed hair. Not less refreshing was the sight of her at spring-tide, herself like a May-blossom, the little prickly thorns about her rather enhancing her delicate charms. And so it turned out that Poppy had not sat altogether like Patience on a monument, smiling at grief and Sir Charles's defection, nor had the buttercups and daisies made out all the history of her little humble life.

In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. And in the spring of more than a year ago, Charlie Graham had been betrayed into the folly of telling his cousin how lovely he thought her.

"No, really?" Poppy had said, looking up at him gratefully. "Do you mean you think I am, because you love me, Charlie, or that you know I am, because you have seen so many women, and can tell?"

"Both," Charlie declared; and, quite forgetting his wonted prudence, he poured forth a whole pastoral at her feet.

"But I thought you had no money, Charlie?" Poppy said practically, after this discourse had come to an end. "And papa said you were as good as engaged to that rich Miss Steele from Sheffield?"

The very name ran down his spine like a cold blade. What prosaic minds these country folk had; prudent, and practical, and going straight at the pounds, shillings, and pence. But it pulled him up, and he was grateful to Poppy for not "flinging herself at his head;" as he afterwards told himself. He went next week and proposed to Miss Steele, and was driven off with contumely by her mamma. The young lady viewed his suit with different eyes; he was a likely man, and she was tired of the Sheffield connection. "What's the good of having money if you can't do what you like with it?" she said to her mother.

"It's all u. p. with me, Poppy," said Captain Graham, coming back exhausted from Cylinder Lodge. "The Steele mother

is a tremendous woman. I have heard of an iron will, but fancy a steel mother-in-law! I'm well out of it, and the whole metallic business; not for all the gold of Peru could I contemplate such a fate."

"Then you didn't love her, Charlie?" asked Poppy, staring hard at him.

"Love her? How could I love her? Don't I love you, Poppy, and sha'n't I always? But what's a poor fellow to do who has nothing but debts to live upon?"

"You needn't sell yourself, I suppose."

"You mistake the case, my most practical Poppy; it is I that am sold."

"Miss Steele was quite right to refuse you," Poppy said, sturdily.

"Then will you take me?"

"Not at a gift," cried Poppy, whose quick eyes had seen the selfishness of the man's nature by sudden revelation. "But, joking apart, Cousin Charlie, don't speak to me in this way any more; it will spoil everything."

"Very well," said Charlie, dejectedly. He knew she was right; but he contrived to show a tenderness for her in a thousand little ways.

When the wedding-day drew near, Poppy good-naturedly asked Miss Steele to be one of her bridesmaids. "It'll give Charlie another chance," she thought; "and who knows? Perhaps he might get to like her, in spite of the mother-in-law." But the invitation was politely refused in an icy note from that unbending lady herself.

Cousin Charlie gave the bride away.

"It'll be too much for me; don't be surprised if I faint," he said to Poppy, a day or two before the wedding; but Poppy looked at him seriously, and the joke died away on his tongue.

There was no weeping or wailing at Poppy's wedding. "I shall do my gnashing of teeth in private," said Cousin Charlie. Mr. Hardwicke, pompous, bland, and unemotional, was not a man to feel that all sunshine had departed from his life because his portionless daughter was going to marry a baronet. He ordered a new black-silk waistcoat for the occasion, and was becomingly urbane. He insisted upon doing the whole duty of a man and a father, and read the service in majestic rolling tones himself. "Such a fine delivery," said Miss Simpkin afterwards in the expansion of the wedding feast; "such a noble voice; such a fine way of rounding his periods! I declare I never did the marriage service justice before!"

"Very," said Captain Charlie, with his mouth full of game pie. "Johnson was a fool to him!"

v.

THERE is a certain class of woman (and that not the worst either) to whom, next to the pleasures of having a man in love with themselves, is the pleasure of consoling him for being unsuccessful in his love for another. To Poppy, therefore, it was a pleasant surprise, when, about two months after her marriage the head waiter of the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel at Wiesbaden brought her a card, upon which was Charlie Graham's superscription, and said the gentleman was waiting to know whether he could be received. "Received?" cried Poppy, springing up; "how ridiculous of Charlie to stand upon ceremony," and she was forthwith rushing to the door, when Sir Charles, putting down his newspaper, asked calmly what was the matter.

"Nothing's the matter!" cried his wife impatiently; "but only think of Charlie coming to Wiesbaden. I wonder if papa told him we were here? So nice of him just to come and see how we were getting on! Did papa tell you we were here, Charlie?" she asked as the elderly cousin entered the room.

"No; I saw your name by chance in the Anzeiger, and thought I would look you up. How do?" said Charlie, condescendingly, to the happy bridegroom. "Hot, isn't it? But we're on the top of a volcano, you know." And as he said it he looked at Poppy with a wicked twinkle in his nice grey eyes.

"Volcano! Nonsense," Poppy answered. "I know better about geology than that; they are always on the tops of mountains don't you know, the Geyser, and Vesuvius, and——"

"Have you breakfasted?" asked Sir Charles, interrupting Poppy's scientific communications, and wishing Graham were down the crater, like the old man in the poem.

"As much as one does," said Captain Graham; "but don't let me interrupt you." So they set to work on their coffee and rolls again.

"Have you seen papa lately?" Poppy asked. "What's he doing?"

"Being consoled by Miss Simpkin, I think," said Graham; and they both laughed. "She's got a better chance now than ever she had," he went on.

"I knew she'd try it on if ever you hooked it, and, by Jove —!"

Poor Miss Simpkin and her immemorial loves were standing jokes in the Hardwicke household, as such things and persons will be amongst housemates who have lived, more or less, each other's lives. But to explain Miss Simpkin would have been a flat and unprofitable task. To Sir Charles it seemed very poor fooling, and he was shut out of the conversation that followed, by his ignorance of the things, and names, and places of which Poppy and the frivolous Graham kept up a ceaseless chatter. On that occasion no reference was made to Miss Steele; but when she got with her cousin alone, Poppy immediately began upon the subject.

"She'd have me, I think," said Captain Graham; "but there's the Gorgon of a mother."

"That's dreadful, certainly," Poppy replied; "but I think you ought to make a sacrifice. I'm so glad I haven't got one."

"One what? A sacrifice? Let me tell you Sir Charles has somewhat the air of a victim."

"Don't," Lady Maxwell answered. "Sir Charles is the happiest man in the world. A mother-in-law I meant. Altogether it's very nice that Max has no relations," she went on expansively.

"Very, especially for the relations," Charles agreed. And Poppy, who began bursting out with a protest, broke into a sudden fit of laughter as she caught the familiar twinkle of Graham's eye. "But you mustn't talk in that way," she said, "or I shall be offended."

"Don't quarrel with an old friend in a strange land, Poppy," Cousin Charles said pathetically.

"Who wants to quarrel?" Poppy asked. And Graham didn't like to say he thought Sir Charles would like it well enough.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "NO ALTERNATIVE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXIX. "IT IS CRUEL TO HER AND TO ME."

"ABOVE all things, I detest underground passages," Kate says, when she has brought her account of her brief interview with her cousin to a close; "and yet, Mrs. Durgan, I couldn't bring myself to speak out my detestation of that woman openly. As it is, I have done more harm than

good: I've made him define his feelings to himself, and cast a sort of halo round her."

"I detest underground passages too, but I admit that I take them sometimes," Mrs. Durgan laughs. "Oh, Kate! I wonder, when you find me out, if you'll ever forgive me?"

Kate disregards the question. She would have to unlearn all she has learnt of Mrs. Durgan's sweet, truthful nature before she could begin to conjecture what her emotions might possibly be if any untoward set of circumstances could ever force Mrs. Durgan to take other than a light and open path.

"She asked me, when she was going away, if I had told Frank what she had been saying about his unsympathetic family, and, before I could answer her, she added, 'You found that he shared my views, I'm sure,' just as if she knew ever so much more about him than I do." Kate goes on impatiently, "Her manner towards him when they were leaving was just that of a woman who was engaged to him. How he can endure the demonstration of her power I can't think."

"Probably she will be engaged to him before they reach Bray," Mrs. Durgan says quietly. "Make up your mind to it, Kate, and be glad that the man who is sacrificed isn't dearer to you than your cousin."

Kate is silent. This subject of her stronger affection for someone else than her cousin is one that she cannot pursue with ease with Mrs. Durgan.

Meanwhile the pair under consideration are going back to Bray. The lady occupies the seat on the near side of the car, and Frank rides as close beside her as his spirited, fidgetty horse will permit him to do. But the driver acts as a barrier between them, and the words that Frank utters every now and then, though they are fraught with promise for the future, are not so perfectly binding and unmistakable as she deems it well they should be.

Accordingly, when they are within a couple of miles of Bray, Miss Grange makes a gallant effort to conquer. She tells herself that if this effort fails, all further ones will be useless; if she does not win to-day, in fact, she must lose.

But the game must be played out quickly now. The expenses of the hotel life at Bray are eating into the soul of her sister-in-law, who begins to demand interest for the money she has expended,

in the shape of assurances of success, which Charlotte is not as yet justified in offering.

"I should like to walk the rest of the way," she cries out to Frank as he comes up to her in a spasmodic and too suddenly arrested trot. "Do you think I may do it? I'm jerked to pieces by the jolting of this car."

Frank responds by pulling up the driver, dismounting from his own horse, and helping Charlotte to alight. Then the car goes merrily bumping along without its fair freight, and the pair are left in the road that is judiciously brightened by the varied tints of the foliage in the hedges, and shadowed by the Wicklow mountains that loom far away to the right and left.

He casts his horse's bridle over his arm, and steps along to suit her slow, unhasting pace. Even as he does it, he feels that each step is carrying him nearer to the land of bondage; but he fancies that the one who is luring him on to sojourn there with her will make it sweeter to him than any land of freedom could ever be.

"Don't you repent yourself bitterly of the folly if you're ever led into the error of paying a visit of mere politeness?" she says to him.

"I'm never led into that error," he says, with a laugh; "and I should think you were one to take your own line too decidedly ever to fall into it either."

"Don't you understand?" she says quickly. "My brother and sister pull the strings which regulate my actions just at present; they insisted upon it that it was due to Mrs. Durgan from one in my humble position that I should make acknowledgment of the honour she has done me in noticing me at all at Lugnaquilla by 'waiting upon her.'"

"The honour she has done you!" he repeats after her, and she sees that his chivalrous feeling of indignation against anyone who "unnecessarily humiliates a helpless woman," &c., is roused. "You don't mean to say your people ever take that line with you?"

"Never mind what 'my people' do," she says, affecting to speak lightly; "they are powerless to hurt me, I assure you. But let me tell my story out, and you shall hear how these two fine ladies at Breagh Place behaved to me to-day."

An instinct of honesty makes him say, "They have neither of them any of the

unpleasant attributes of fine-ladies about them, surely? I know Kate hasn't."

Miss Grange shakes her head. "They played the part of putters-down of presumption for the first time for my benefit then," she says musingly. "Frank, was it quite what you expected of your cousin, that she should try to break such a butterfly as I am on the wheel?"

"Kate is incapable of doing anything spiteful," he asserts; but the very way in which he looks with questioning eagerness at her as he says it—looks as if he were longing far too anxiously for her to agree with him—emboldens her to say,

"So much for man's judgment; at least, so much for the judgment of a man whom a falsely-frank manner has beguiled. Why, your Kate became emphatically what women call 'nasty' and men 'spiteful' when I unintentionally wounded her by mentioning you as if I were on terms of equality with you—mentioning you as I should mention any other man who had given me his friendship as you have done; in fact, she drew herself up, and begged me to remember that 'I was speaking of her cousin,' and altogether paraded me before Mrs. Durgan as a mere outsider, in a way that made me vow that my first should be my last visit to Breagh Place."

"It wasn't like Kate," is all he can bring himself to say, in his mortified agitation, as she brings her garbled statement to a conclusion.

In a vague way he feels sure that she is not telling all the truth concerning the manner of Kate—who, as he knew well, would never take a mean and underhand advantage of any enemy. But though he thinks something is held back, in a passive way, by this quiet, sensitive, and sensible Miss Grange, he never suspects her for a moment of the active offence of lying by implication.

"Never mind," she says, presently, "in spite of her fierce demand that I should recognise her claims of kindred to you, I shall find it hard to associate you two together in my memory when I go on my way, wherever it may be. Remembering all your kindness and courtesy and all her rough unkindness, there will be no links to join you together in my mind, I'm glad to say."

Slowly as they are walking, it is the lady who regulates the pace; she feels anxiously sure that the ground is slipping away from beneath her feet far too fast for her purpose. All her

amiability towards Frank, all her animus towards Kate, all her little, premature wavings of the flag of victory and triumph will have been in vain, if Frank walks into Bray by her side this day a free man! So far, all has gone just exactly as she could have wished it to go; but, if a hitch comes now, down will come the structure that need, ambition, and a sort of jealous, contemptuous, but still genuine, love for him has raised.

"Our last walk together, Frank," she says, in a half-absent kind of way, as she slackens speed, and seems to be giving the hedge-side, along which she is sauntering, the benefit of a most thorough investigation. "I can't help thinking that the law of compensation does not work in my case; I am going away from Bray—and you and your cousin stay on here, in a lovely country, with the friends she loves best. What meritorious act has she committed that all the sunshine should fall on her side of the road, and what unpardonable sin have I sinned that all the shade should be on mine?"

She seems to warm with her words; she looks at him appealingly, searchingly, with a look that seems to crave for his sympathy. Hers is not one of those flexible, mobile faces which quiver with every shade of a change of feeling. Nevertheless, it works now under the influence of real anxiety, for time is flying, and Frank is halting.

Against his instincts, against his better judgment—almost against his inclination, so incomprehensible are the workings of this man's mind—he is led on to say,

"You shall neither leave Bray nor me, my darling. If my love can bring sunshine about your path, you shall have it for the rest of my life."

He does not seal his pledge with a kiss, but he tucks her hand in his arm as she responds very definitely and deliberately with acquiescent words to his offer, and he calls her his "own darling," in an impassioned way that rather astonishes himself, and makes him doubt whether he is such a fool for being led on to this, as he was inclined to think himself while he was hesitating a minute or two ago.

"Perhaps you had better speak to my brother at once, Frank," she says, "he is rather peculiar—rather fidgetty I must admit, and if he fancies that anything like concealment is being practised towards him, he will be annoyed."

"I'll have it out with him at once, if

you wish it," Frank says, laughing. "I can't say, for my own part, that I am particularly fond of interviewing male relations on these interesting occasions, but it has to be done."

"I have quite as great a dislike to anything like fuss and parade about these matters as you can have," she says, "but we must do as custom commands, to a certain degree." Then she laughs in her quiet way, and adds, "my brother and sister-in-law imagine they will have the freedom of your house as before, I believe; I shall have the greatest pleasure in dispelling that illusion!"

She says it with a calm enjoyment of their anticipated discomfiture that is rather staggering to him. Her people are unpleasant to him to the last degree, but they are her people still, and it shocks him that she can be so ready to turn upon them, and pay them back evil for the good they have done her in bringing her under his notice. But his lazy habit of allowing things to settle themselves, his distaste for explanations, his antipathy to the Granges, and his vain liking for the woman by his side, all combine to keep him from offering any protest against this cool disclaimer of any debt of gratitude being due from her to her brother.

"Mrs. Constable will be the greatest sufferer in this affair, Frank," she says, presently, "she will have to renounce that cherished child of yours to me, for I will have no interference with my management: understand this, I will be everything or nothing in your house."

"You shall be everything," he laughs, "don't vex yourself by supposing that my soul cleaves to Mrs. Constable to such a degree that I shall oppose her exit from under my roof-tree." Then he goes on to explain that the Constable faction have made him taste of the waters of bitterness perpetually, on account of that money of poor May's, which he is to do as he pleases with while he lives.

Sagacious Charlotte takes in every detail connected with the case, and weighs the consequences well of her marriage with him, even now in the first flush of her engagement. If he dies before her, the money will go to May's child, and she (Charlotte) will have nothing to depend on but the money she may be able to put by out of the income, while she has the spending of it.

"I'll make him work, and settle all that he gets by his writings on me," she

thinks. "I know how to sting him on; when once I am his wife I'll let him know the contempt I have for want of energy in men." On the whole, she thinks that though there might be a possibility of her doing better in the matrimonial mart, the probability is that she would do infinitely worse if she let this opportunity pass by. Therefore she determines that the engagement shall be made known as speedily as possible.

"Frank Forest has asked me to marry him, and I have said yes," she says, the instant they come into her brother's presence, and Mr. Grange tries not to look as overjoyed as he feels, at this blessed realisation of their hopes and schemes.

Frank is rather astonished at the way he is being regulated by his last enslaver. She arranges the time and the terms in which he is to make known to his family the blessing he has brought upon himself. "Miss Mervyn had better understand at once that she must alter her manner towards me, or make the sacrifice of holding no further intercourse with you, Frank," she says. "I have always felt that it is the due of any man I may marry, that his family shall treat me with respect."

"You are not fond of going out and fighting windmills I hope, are you?" he says, with a laugh, and she answers quietly,

"I will alienate you from any one who displeases me; it is not fair to her, nor to me, that she should continue in the error of thinking me a powerless person who may be offended with impunity. I hope you are not annoyed at my being so out-spoken?"

She does not look as if she had a hope about the matter. Her whole manner is fraught with indifference to any opinion he may have about it.

"I always like out-spoken people," he says, evasively; "you know where you are with them." He has begun his sentence with the intention of declaring that he will be as out-spoken as herself, and that she had better understand from the first that nothing will make him forfeit his cousin Kate's friendship; but his love of peace induces him to relinquish his determination, and for the first time in his life he feels himself to be a coward.

Worse than this, he feels himself to be a fool, when, later on in the day, he finds himself alone with Bellairs, and knows that the onus is on him of communicating the intelligence of his contemplated change of condition to his friend.

"You don't mean to say that she has

done you like that, Forest? Why her game has been too plain all along; you must have seen it."

"If a girl loves a fellow she can't always conceal her feelings," Frank expostulates.

"Loves a fellow! that woman hasn't it in her to love anything but ease and luxury; if I were free I'd make her an offer for the sake of freeing you, and then I'd throw her over as remorselessly as I would any other false-hearted cat. Kate fathomed her at once."

"Kate is jealous of her," Frank says, uneasily; "but look here, old fellow; I'm going to marry her, so the less you say the better; we may remember your words awkwardly by-and-by when she's my wife; the mischief's done, and, after all, she's a clever girl."

"Good luck and happiness to you, however it goes," Bellairs says, heartily; "now I must tell you something about myself."

CHAPTER XL. "I'LL HAVE IT OUT WITH YOU."

"My cousin Georgie has asked me to keep it quiet, for some reason or other; but I think the less humbug there is about these matters the better. The fact is, I'm engaged to her," says Captain Bellairs.

"The devil you are!" Frank blurts out, his thoughts reverting to Kate in an instant. Bellairs safely out of the field, Kate might have been his, after all, if only that clever, cautious Charlotte had not taught him to think that it would be a very good thing that he should marry her. Not that a doubt has as yet risen in his mind as to the wisdom of the step he has taken—but Kate free, both hand and heart free, as he hopes, and himself fettered! Unquestionably the position is a perplexing if not altogether a disagreeable one. Small wonder that he feels annoyed with his friend for not having told him before of this engagement with Mrs. Durgan.

"Georgie is a dear little woman, and a clever little woman into the bargain," Bellairs says, rather discontentedly; "but I'm not prepared to swear that I am desperately in love with her, or anything of the kind. I've gone through the real thing, and I know what it is; but our marriage will keep Georgie in the home she loves, which she would have to leave in the ordinary course of events; and I am quite fond enough of her to make her as happy as a reasonable woman can expect to be made."

"I don't see through her object in

keeping it dark so long," Frank urges. "Has she kept it from Kate as well as the rest of us?"

Captain Bellairs turns a shade paler. "I'm sorry to say she has," he says; "and, to tell the truth, I am feeling more about the concealment having been practised towards Miss Mervyn than I like to talk about." As he speaks, his thoughts re-traverse the sunny paths he has been treading with Kate during these last few weeks, and as he recalls sundry unadvised looks and words that have passed between them, he is not conscience-free.

"Kate isn't a girl to make a mistake," Frank says. "You know best how far you have gone with her; but she never magnifies small civilities, and she's not at all the type of girl to deliver herself up a feeble victim to unrequited affection——"

"I'm not conceited ass enough to imagine that she has given me a thought," Bellairs interrupts; and Frank answers (his mind, as usual, full of himself),

"I had myself in view rather than you when I spoke, to tell the truth. It's useless my attempting to conceal the fact that I have been very spooney on Kate, and at one time she cared a good deal for me. However, all that's at an end, and Kate isn't a girl to be jealous of a girl who succeeds her, if she happens to think well of the girl: as it is——" He pauses, and Bellairs takes up the word.

"As it is, she doesn't think well of this girl; and you have more regard than you're quite prepared to allow left for her opinion. Well, Frank, old boy, there's no help for it now."

"I wish you would come over to Breagh Place with me. We will explode the two facts at the same time, and they'll act as counter-irritants one on the other. I have worse things than you have to endure. There is Mrs. Constable to be faced, informed, and finally ousted from my house, which will be the stage for a scene of carnage when she hears I am going to marry again." Frank says all this with a slight effort to be free and unembarrassed, jocular, and at peace in his manner; but he fails, and his air of dejection appears to infect his friend.

"I also shall have torrents of feeling to stem when Cissy Angerstein finds out that I am going to marry Georgie Durgan, and live in Ireland altogether. Poor girl! she has nourished a delusion for years, and it has embittered our intercourse and estranged me from her in a measure; all

the same I don't like the idea of paining her, and I shrink from the task of telling her."

"It's the eternal rain, and this enervating climate that has done for us both," Frank grumbles. "Those infernal cars, too! I have been obliged to hold her on several times when the road has been rough; but we must go through with it now!"

"Look here, Forest," Bellairs says, eagerly; "don't misunderstand me, I am a lucky fellow to have got Mrs. Durgan; she's a woman any man could love and admire and trust; she's one of the dearest and best creatures; don't imagine for a moment that I don't perfectly appreciate her——"

"But you don't perfectly appreciate the luck of which you speak," Frank says.

They are certainly not too happy in their successful wooing, not too pleased with the prospect of being the possessors ultimately of the ladies they are designing to wed. Success has not unduly elated either of them, and the mood in which they start to ride over to Breagh Place the day after Miss Grange made her successful coup near Bray, is a markedly depressed one. But their spirits rise under the influence of the exercise and the conviction that there is a positive necessity for facing this climax which is approaching.

There is something in the manner of the men which prepares the women, who know every expression of the faces before them, for what is to come.

"You have broken our compact, Harry," Mrs. Durgan says, reprovingly; "I can see you have." Then with a heightened colour, she puts her hand on his arm and pulls him down on to the arm of her chair, and whispers to him,

"You don't know what mischief you have done, if you have made mention of an engagement that is very likely to be broken."

He does not love, that is to say, he is not in love with the woman who says this, and with all the force of his passionate nature he does still love Kate Mervyn. Nevertheless, when Mrs. Durgan speaks of the possibility of the breaking of their engagement, that engagement suddenly becomes a dear and valued thing to him, and he resents the idea of any fracture occurring to it, as indignantly and genuinely, as if he had not been, for weeks, wishing to wake and find it all a mere chimera of the brain.

He has all a man's nervous dread of any-

one hearing anything about him that is detrimental to his dignity, or at all subversive of the idea that he is omnipotent with any woman with whom he desires to be omnipotent. In addition to this abstract aversion to being suspected of aught resembling failure, he has a special aversion to the possibility of Kate hearing that another woman, after holding him in the hollow of her hand for some time, can calmly speak of throwing him away, as if it were not an unlikely contingency. These are his paramount sensations. Superadded to these is the human instinct which teaches us to keep every wound concealed.

A moment's observation of Kate and Frank convinces Bellairs that he need not fear detection from them. Frank is eagerly extenuating his own conduct, and trying to prove that Miss Grange's has been such as becomes a modest young maiden (on promotion) throughout; and Kate is listening to him in silence, with a pitying, sorrowful look on her face that damages Miss Grange in her lover's estimation, far more effectually than any words spoken in in-temperate haste and anger could have done.

"You see," Frank is urging, "when a fellow can't get the woman he loves, it isn't good for him to live alone, so the only thing to be done, is to take the woman who loves him."

"She does love you then; I am glad you feel that, Frank. Well, dear, all that remains for me to say, is, may you be very happy."

"You have no hard thoughts about me, Kate; bless you for that," he says, but in his secret soul he is rather hurt that she can so entirely renounce him as to have no "hard thoughts" of him, even when she hears that he is going to be married to someone else.

"Bellairs is in the same box," Frank says, with a little uneasy suspicion of being a trifle revengeful about something.

"In the same box? Do you mean that he is in love with Miss Grange, too?" she asks, kindling into real, womanly, jealous wrath in an instant.

"I mean that he is going to be married to Mrs. Durgan," Frank mutters, averting his eyes from the face that is suffused for one moment by a crimson blush, and that pales the next, under the influence of what must be a most heart-sickening pang to run the white flag up above the red in such a sudden way.

"Going to be married!" she says, slowly. "Frank! you are not playing

with me, are you? because you are shaking my trust in her, as well as in him——"

"Then you have been putting trust in him again, foolishly!" Frank half questions, half asserts, "it's no use giving women lessons, however sharp and thorough they may be; they never profit by them. That Torquay business ought to have taught you to have guarded your heart against him again."

"Why Frank, I learnt it so badly that it didn't even teach me to guard my heart against you, at one time," she says, with just a touch of this newly-acquired bitterness of hers. Then she goes on to speculate in lowered tones—for the conversation between the other pair has nearly died away into silence—as to the reason why this reticence has been observed towards her; as to the motive that could be powerful enough to throw a shade of seeming falseness over one of the frankest souls that had ever apparently belied itself, within Kate's experience.

"She had her reasons, be sure of that," Frank says, caustically. He is not too well disposed towards the sex at present, and is quite inclined to attribute any amount of envy, hatred, malice, and double dealing to any mentioned member of it. The thought of his recently-acquired Charlotte, and of all he will have to endure at her steady, composed, passive hands, stings him into feelings and utterances of injustice against the whole sisterhood.

"She had her reasons, and I don't think we have very far to look for them," he goes on, scanning Kate's changing countenance with angry eyes as he speaks. "I haven't met with the angelic woman in this world yet who would spare herself the pleasant spectacle of a sister-woman making a fool of herself. Mrs. Durgan was too sure of her own position with him to feel any alarm at the idea of your offering him the most potent flattery you could offer; she was all right, she didn't care for your after-smarts."

There is no sympathy for Kate in either his words or his way as he says all this. Further than this, there is no sympathy for her in his heart. In his estimation she has forfeited everything of that kind, both from himself and the world in general, by suffering affections to wander away in the direction of any other man than himself. True, her state smooths all difficulties of feeling on her account out of the way of his marriage with Charlotte;

but he would have preferred a different process of smoothing altogether.

She likes him so well, so heartily and thoroughly still in her generous, forgiving way, that it hurts her to fathom this ungenerous hardness on his part. There was nothing unwomanly, nothing forward nor unworthy in her demeanour, towards Captain Bellairs. It wounds her love of veracity, therefore, as well as her womanly pride, when Frank angrily assumes that there have been these reprehensible things, and that he is sorry to be compelled to openly manifest his disapproval of them.

"We'll turn to the pleasanter topic of your engagement, Frank," she says, quickly. "Let unrealities and vain imaginings alone, and tell me more about the happy reality you have achieved. When and where do you marry?"

"In London, I suppose," he answers, haltingly.

The pleasant topic will not get itself well and easily talked about, it appears. It is projected in a jerky way into their intercourse, and he is sensitively alive to the fact that Kate is aware that it is not the one about which his thoughts twine most tenderly.

"In London! among you all?" she replies, softly.

"I don't know about that. My mother is rather queer, and Gertrude gets on the stilts without a moment's hesitation. She's going to be married to that fool, Clement Graham, you know, and she has it all her own way (as the wealthy ones always have) with my mother just now. She may choose to think that I, being her brother, am making a bad match."

"If you never have the same thought it will matter very little what the rest of the world think," Kate says, encouragingly. "I always like men who gang their own gait without veering about with every contrary opinion that may be wafted forth by their various friends."

"Whether he's right or whether he's wrong?" Frank questions; and when she says "Yes," he remarks discontentedly that he is as far as ever from knowing what she really thinks of Charlotte Grange.

He is obliged by the recognised forces of his condition to go off to Bray soon, and Captain Bellairs goes with him. There are a few constrained parting words spoken between the latter and Kate, but they tell

either very little of the real state of the other's emotions.

"I ought to say something very pretty to you about Frank," he says; "but the fact is, I can't think of anything excepting that I hope he will be happy."

"Thanks; that at least everyone who knows him must hope," Kate answers.

"There's a good deal of risk in it."

"Yes, there's a good deal of risk in every marriage."

"She'll tone him down a bit. The exuberant spirit of youth won't be able to stand out against that depressing, stolid calm of hers."

"You're not too hopeful for him."

"I'm not too hopeful for anyone in affairs of this kind. As far as I have seen, before the fatal day arrives one or other of the contracting parties awakes to a full knowledge of the folly he or she is about to commit."

"I mustn't detain you," Kate says nervously in response to this. "Let me congratulate you at any rate, and then—go."

He takes her hand and gives it a strong, long clasp. He looks into her eyes, with eyes that are lighted by the fire of such passionate feeling for her, that it shocks and staggers her to remember that he is honour-bound to the powerless woman behind them, sitting there in her touching helplessness, watching this scene, which must be fraught with so much meaning for her. With a sudden despairing movement of the head, she withdraws her hand from his and whispers,

"Never think that I have a single hard thought of you; weak as I have been, I have never been weak enough to look forward to a happier ending for myself than this."

She passes down among the tall ferns and flowering plants as she says this, and goes out into the garden, out of ear-shot of the farewells which she fears are being interchanged behind her, hoping for one hour at least to herself in which to battle down, to defeat and kill the crowning misery of her life.

But the two men have not been gone five minutes before a messenger comes from Mrs. Durgan, with a request that "Miss Mervyn will come to her at once."

When she goes, she is greeted with the words—

"Now Kate, I'll have it out with you."